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MAS Testimony to the Landmarks Preservation Commission regarding the Proposed City-wide Rule

"Proposed amendment to section 2-21 of the rules relating to the installation of public communication structures to provide free WiFi and phone service, pursuant to a city-wide franchise, to replace existing public pay telephones."

May 3, 2016

The Municipal Art Society of New York finds the proposed rules amendment to be appropriate. The standards for the approval of the installation of public communications structures (PCS) are similar to the existing approval for public pay telephones (PPT). In fact, PCS devices will replace existing PPT locations offering free rather than paid phone service. In the instance where a new location is desired, it will be presented to the local Community Board for review. The PCS kiosks will not be installed in historic paving or directly in front of individual landmark buildings, and advertising panels are prohibited in residential districts.

Like the telephone service of a previous era, free Wi-Fi is a public utility -- one that should benefit all New Yorkers equally.